COBB COUNTY ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT, REDEVELOPMENT OR BUILDING RENOVATIONS

Goals & Objective

The goal of the Cobb County Architectural Design Guidelines is to provide a method to create better designs for commercial/retail/office/institutional buildings within the County. The ultimate design of a building, is in many ways an artistic expression and cannot be quantified or easily regulated. However, some basic design features of a building's footprint and exterior are essential and will go a long way towards discouraging a featureless redundancy of architecture and improving, the visual interest in a building's appearance from the street. As studies indicate, retail/commercial areas that have a higher aesthetic appeal to customers realize an increase in pedestrian activity. Buildings with a higher standard of architecture have increased resale value and realize more stable property values, whereby resulting in a more stable tax base.

The objective of these guidelines is to articulate clear community design principals that assist architects/engineers in understanding the County's minimum design criteria. These standards do not dictate or limit design or style of a building, as architectural diversity is encouraged, but will encourage more thoughtful and aesthetically pleasing solutions to a building's design. The regulatory concept is to calculate design points for four different aspects of a building's design. The required point system of these standards allow flexibility in achieving the minimum number of **total** points for a particular building, while there is no minimum for any of the individual four factors. The four design rules or factors are fashioned to give a developer/architect some flexibility in achieving the minimum number of total point for a particular building.

Explanation of the Points

The numbering system provides a system that allows architects/engineers to be able to know, as they are designing the building, if the minimum scoring, criteria is being met. Thus, upon submission of the plans to the Planning Division for architectural review, the architect/engineer will have a good degree of comfort that their design meets all minimum standards. The system also ensures the rating system is measured on a quantifiable level, therefore ensuring an equitable and non-arbitrary review among- all applications.

The rules are divided into four categories and designed to encourage interesting building facades. Points are given for changing the plane of a building facade, for providing contrast with shade (porches, balconies, canopies) or providing interesting design features, roof lines or wall openings (windows, doors). Since most designs would not score enough points from an individual category, the objective for the building designer is to gain sufficient points in the combination of all four categories to achieve the minimum number for the particular classification use. The scoring system is designed to achieve a simple minimum number of **10** for buildings planned for *Industrial use, **20** for buildings planned for **Office/Institutional use, and **25** for buildings planned for a ***Retail/Commercial use.

*Industrial uses are defined by the Cobb County Zoning Ordinance as all permitted uses identified within the Light Industrial (LI) and Heavy Industrial (HI) zoning categories.

** Office/Institutional uses are defined by the Cobb County Zoning Ordinance as all permitted uses identified within the Low-Rise Office (LRO), Office/Services (OS), Office/Institutional (OI), Office Mid-Rise (OMR), and Office Hi-Rise (OHR).

***Retail/Commercial uses are defined by the Cobb County Zoning Ordinance as all permitted uses identified within the Limited Retail Commercial (LRC), Neighborhood Retail Commercial (NRC), Community Retail Commercial (CRC), Neighborhood Shopping (NS), Planned Shopping Center (PSC), General Commercial (GC), Tourist Services (TS), Regional Retail Commercial (RRC), Urban Village Commercial (UVC), and Planned Village Commercial (PVC).

The four categories are:

A. EXTERIOR WALL LENGTH:
This rule gives points for breaking long facades by a variation in the building surface, such as the projection/departure of walls.

B. EXTERIOR SURFACE AREAS:
This rule gives points for breaking walls in the vertical plane, such as providing roof lopes.

C. SHADE COVERAGE AREAS:
Points are awarded in this category for building facades that have projections or other features that provide building shadows, such as balconies, porches and canopies.

D. EXTERIOR WALL INTERRUPTIONS:
Doors, windows and other framed building openings that help to break up the "bleak" look of a long, blank wall. Points are given for the amount of openings in a building Surface.

Use of Guidelines

The guidelines apply to new development on undeveloped parcels or redevelopment proposals involving demolition of existing structures. The guidelines will also apply when a permit is sought to remodel or make improvements that are equal to or greater than fifty percent (50%) of the total, current assessed value of the structure. If stipulations relating to the architecture of a building is placed on a development during a zoning case or stipulations have been placed on a piece of property prior to adoption of these standards, those stipulations will take precedent over these standards, if found to be in conflict. Otherwise, past and future zoning stipulations will be in concert with the adopted standards, with the strictest enforced.

These guidelines are only a portion of the overall development review conducted by the County. The laws, ordinances and development standards of the County are not negated by

these review guidelines, but are in addition to the adopted laws and ordinances of the Cobb County Code. If any Guideline element is in conflict with, or is more stringent than any pertinent County Code, the more stringent requirement will be enforced.

Submission of Design Guideline Worksheet

Review of the worksheet is conducted by the Planning, Division staff and not an architectural review committee, thereby ensuring an efficient review process. The architectural review will be concurrent with the Plan Review process and conducted in an expedient manner. At the time the developer/architect/engineer submits engineering drawings to Plan Review, the applicant will submit the following items for architectural review (1) elevation drawings of all sides of the building, (2) footprint of building with all pertinent measurements needed for guideline calculation purposes (see worksheet), (3 list of building materials and associated color, size, style and (4) a completed architectural review worksheet, as supplied by the County. Routine review time shall be no more than ten (10) business days, which will provide ample time for staff to conduct the review and for the architect/engineer, if necessary, to make any necessary revisions. Once architectural approval is granted, the architect/engineer/developer will be contacted and notified of the approval and all review items submitted by the applicant will be forwarded to the Plan Review Section, including the approved Guideline Worksheet. *Please note, prior to the adopted date of these standards, all plans submitted to Site Plan Review for approval, as well as sites currently being permitted and constructed, will be considered exempt.*

Architectural Requirements

Architectural design of the building's exterior shall comply with the following minimum standards:

1. Building facades shall be of architectural treatments of glass and brick, stone, architectural block, stucco and/or wood (combining these finishes are allowed and encouraged).

2. Portable buildings shall be prohibited. Metal buildings are prohibited except for buildings that have an *Industrial use. Only then, a maximum of fifty percent (50%) of the building's side(s) or rear can be metal and shall be used in combination with another exterior building material noted in #1 above. However, the front of all *Industrial buildings must be made of a building material noted in #1 above. If an *Industrial building will be adjacent to a residentially zoned property, any side(s) of the building visible from that residentially zoned property shall not be made of metal.

3. The preferred roofing materials for roofs are metal, tile, slate, stone or wood shake. If typical shingles are used such as asphalt, the appearance should be that of slate, tile, metal, or shake.

4. Facades of anchor stores located within a multi-tenant buildings shall be varied in the depth of the footprint and in the height of each tenants roofline. Also, distinct architectural identity for the entry into separate businesses shall be provided in the facade.

5. .Exterior building walls shall incorporate changes in building material, color or facade by using such elements as windows, doors, trellises, false windows, recessed panels, soldiered columns, or landscaping adjacent to, or growing on, the building. Such changes should be frequent and determined by the height, length and overall scale of the building.

6. All mechanical, HVAC and like systems shall be screened from all street, driveway, pedestrian level views and residential views. Rooflines shall be designed to screen such equipment located atop buildings, and an opaque wall or fence of masonry, stucco, split-faced block, wood, etc. shall provide adequate screening for ground-based equipment.

Site Plan Recommendations

1. Where appropriate and feasible, buildings may be situated to the front of property setbacks
with parking oriented toward the side and rear of structure(s).

2. Landscaping should be used to shield automobile parking lots from public vantage points, including streets and sidewalks.

3. Dumpsters should be located at the rear of a structure/site and should be enclosed with an opaque (solid) wall enclosure. The enclosure should be constructed of a masonry building material that is the same, or similar, to the primary structure and have gates made of metal.

4. Decorative lamppost, benches, bicycle racks, planters are all encouraged to improve the pedestrian sidewalk area and to encourage pedestrian activity.

Appeal of Guidelines

An applicant that does not meet the minimum design score and is appealing a scoring criteria element, can do so with the Director of Community Development. An appeal of the Director's determination can be made at the monthly meeting of the Cobb County Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA). 'The BZA will only consider appeals of the staff's administrative decisions and scoring criteria. The BZA will not consider variances to these guidelines. An application for appeal can be filed with the Cobb County Zoning Division. Following the appeal review, the decision of the BZA shall be final.

COMMERCIAL BUILDING DESIGN FACTORS WORKSHEET

A. EXTERIOR WALL LENGTH:

1. L = Length in feet of building perimeter visible from the street. (see Figure 1) _____ ft.

2. F = Length of the longest horizontal straight section of the exterior facade visible from the street. (see Figure 2) _____ ft.

To determine if a horizontal straight section of building is two separate walls, the following will apply:

a. There must be an intervening physical separation of space or wall which makes a horizontal separation of at least three feet (see Figure 2).
b. The intervening physical separation of the space and wall must make a vertical separation of at least one foot (see Figure 3).
c. The total perimeter- length of the intervening space or wall section must be at least five feet (i.e., section a. above must total five feet). (see Figure 3)
d. Materials within the intervening section or the same plane section of the wall can be of the same building material or a different material to encourage contrast.
e. When a wall section does not meet requirements of a, b and c above, the plane shall be considered one wall section. (see Figure 3)

3. **W** = ratio of $\frac{\mathbf{L}}{\mathbf{F}}$ = _____

4. **Fa** = **(W x 2)** _____

B. EXTERIOR SURFACE AREAS:

1. P = Total surface area of all flat and/or projected, non-sloping, sides of: the building visible from the street (i.e. the flat vertical exterior walls of the building) (see Figure 4) _____ s.f.

2. **R =** Total surface area of all sloping surfaces of the building that is visible from the street (i.e. roof of building) (see Figure 4). _____ sf.

For the purpose of the calculation of "**R**":

a. Only sloping areas that range from 15 degrees to 75 decrees from the vertical point may be included in this calculation.

b. Circular, convex or concave wall surfaces must be offset at least one foot from the vertical wall surface and have an angle of at least 60 decrees to be included in the surface area calculation. (see Figure 4)

c. **Q** = the total number- of building sides visible from the street.

3. **E** = ratio of $\frac{\mathbf{R}}{\mathbf{P}}$ = _____

4. **Fb =(10 x E) =_____**

C. SHADE COVERAGE AREAS:

1. **S =** Total covered but unenclosed structural exterior area attached to the building and measured on a horizontal plane. (see Figure 6) _____ s.f.

   a. The floor area of covered exterior balconies may be included. Attached canopies, porches, verandas, and other shad oriented structural design features may also be included.
   b. Each vertical opening into the shaded area must be framed on the top and sides by structural building materials. The area around the "frame" of the opening must be at least 20% of the opening area. (see Figure 6)
   c. The area under detached canopies shall not be included in the calculation.

2. **G** = Total area of the interior ground floor of the build _____ s.f.

3. **C** = ratio of' $\frac{\mathbf{S}}{\mathbf{G}}$ = _____

4. **Fc** = (100 x C) = _____

D. EXTERIOR WALL INTERRUPTIONS:

1. **W'** = Total number of windows, doors, and other openings into the structure through which light may pass. _____

For the purpose of this calculation, each opening must be framed on the sides, top and/or bottom by structural building- materials that equals in surface area to at least 50% of the surface area of the opening.

2. **Q** = As previously calculated in Subsection B (2) (c) above (total number of visible sides from the street) _____

3. **O** = ratio of $\frac{\mathbf{W}}{\mathbf{Q}}$ = _____

4. **Fd** equals the ratio of **O** above, if total floor area is less than 50,000 sf. If floor area is greater than or equal to 50,000 s.f., **Fd** shall be no more than 10 points_____

TOTAL DESIGN SCORE: Fa + Fb + Fc + Fd =_____

Points Required:	**Commercial/Retail**	**25 points**
	Office/Institutional	**20 points**
	Industrial	**10 points**

Cobb County Architectural Design Guideline Worksheet

A. <u>Exterior Wall Length</u>:

___1. **L** = Length in feet of building perimeter visible from the street. _____ ft.

___2. **F** = Length of longest horizontal straight section of the exterior facade visible from the street. _____ft.

___3. W = ratio of L / F = _____.

___4. F**a** = W x 2 = _____.

_____

B. <u>Exterior Surface Areas</u>:

___1. **P** = Total surface area of all flat and/or projected, non-sloping, sides of the building visible from the (i.e. the flat vertical ecterior walls of the building) (see Figure 4). _____s.f.

___2. **R** = Total surface area of all sloping surfaces of the building that are visible from the street (i.e., roof of building) (see Figure 4). _____s.f.

___3. E = ratio of = R / P = _____.

___4. Fb = 10 x E = _____.

_____
_____

C. <u>Shade Coverage Variables</u>:

___1. **S** = Total covered but unenclosed structural exterior area attached to the building and measured on a horizontal plane. (see Figure 6) _____s.f.

___2. **G** = Total area of the interior ground floor of the building. _____s.f.

___3. **C** = Shade coverage ratio or S / G = _____.

___4. F**c** = 100 x C = _____.

D. EXTERIOR WALL INTERRUPTIONS:

1. **W'** = Total number of windows, doors, and other openings into the structure through which light may pass. _____

For the purpose of this calculation, each opening must be framed on the sides, top and/or bottom by structural building- materials that equals in surface area to at least 50% of the surface area of the opening.

2. **Q** = As previously calculated in Subsection B (2) (c) above (total number of visible sides from the street) _____

3. **O** = ratio of $\frac{\mathbf{W}}{\mathbf{Q}}$ = _____

4. **Fd** equals the ratio of **O** above, if total floor area is less than 50,000 sf. If floor area is greater than or equal to 50,000 s.f., **Fd** shall be no more than 10 points _____

E. Exterior Wall Interruptions:

___1. **W** = Total number of windows, doors and other openings into the structure through which light may pass = _____.

___2. **Q** = Total number of building's visible sides from the street _____.

___3. O = ratio of W / Q _____.

___4. Fd is the ratio of O above, if total floor area is less than 50,000 s.f. For floor area greater than or equal to 50,000 s.f., "Fd" shall not exceed 10 points _____.

_____
_____

F. Total Design Score:

TOTAL = Fa + Fb + Fc + Fd = _____

Staff Comment:

DEFINITIONS/USE OF TERMS

Aggregate – Any of a variety of materials, such as sand and gravel, added to a cement mixture to make concrete.

Arcading – A series of arches, raised on columns, that are represented in relief as decoration of a solid wall.

Articulation – Shapes and surfaces having joints or segments which subdivide the area or elements and which add scale and rhythm to an otherwise plain surface.

Assessed Value – The most recently apprised value of a structure according to the Cobb County Tax Assessors Office.

Balcony – A projecting platform usually on the exterior of a building, sometimes supported from below by brackets, wood, metal or masonry.

Baluster – One of a number of short vertical members used to support a stair railing.

Band – A flat horizontal fascia, or a continuous member or series of moldings projecting slightly from the wall plane, encircling a building or along a wall, that makes a division in the wall.

Bond – an arrangement of masonry units laid in a particular pattern that provides a contrasting stringcourse to the primary buildings masonry pattern.

Border – A margin, rim, or edge around or along an element; a design or a decorative strip on the edge of an element.

Bracket – A projection from a vertical surface providing structural or visual support under cornices, balconies, windows, or any other overhanging member.

Building material – Any material used in the construction of buildings, such as steel, concrete, brick, masonry, glass, wood, among others.

Canopy – A covered area which extends from the wall of a building, protecting an enclosure such as a door or window.

Cap – The top member of any vertical architectural element that projects such as the cornice of a wall or the transom of a door.

Coping – A protective covering over the top of a wall or parapet, either flat or sloping and sometimes extending beyond the front wall.

Corbel – A series of graduated projections, beginning at the face of the wall and progressing outward and upward, that serves as a support for a top cornice.
Concave – Forms that are curved like the inner surface of a hollow circle.

Convex – Forms that have a surface or boundary that curves outward as in the exterior or outer surface of a circle.

Cornice – A projecting shelf along the top of a wall supported by a series of brackets; the ornamental exterior trim where the building's roof meets the wall.

Crenellation – A pattern of repeated depressed openings in a parapet wall.

Door – A hinged, sliding, tilting, or folding panel for closing openings in a wall or at entrances to buildings, rooms, or cabinets and closets.

Dressing – Masonry and moldings of better quality than the facing materials, used around door and window openings or at corners of buildings.

Eave – The projecting overhang at the lower edge of a roof that sheds rain water.

Elevation – A drawing showing the vertical, exterior elements of a building as a direct projection to a vertical plane.

Façade – The main exterior face of a building, particularly one of its main sides facing a public space, almost always containing one or more entrances and noted by elaborate exterior stylistic details.

Fenestration – The design and placement of windows and other exterior openings in a building.

Floor Area – The gross horizontal area of the floor(s) of a building, excluding porches, balconies, etc and measured from the exterior face of the exterior walls of a building.

Frieze – An elevated horizontal continuous band or panel that is usually located below the cornice, and often decorated with a repeated pattern.

Gable – The entire triangular end of a wall, above the level of the eaves, that conforms to the slope of the roof to which it abuts.

Horizontal – Operating or in the direction of a plane along the horizon or a base line.

Intervening – to occur, disrupt, or come between points.

Mansard roof – A roof with a steep lower slope and a flatter upper slope on all sides, either of convex or concave shape.

Masonry – A building material that includes all stone products, all brick products and all concrete block units, including decorative and customized blocks.

Molding – a decorative profile given to architectural cavities or projections such as cornices, bases, or door and window jambs/heads.

Parallel – extending in the same direction and not meeting or intersecting.

Parapet – A low protective wall or railing along the edge and above a roof, balcony, or similar structure.

Perimeter – The outer boundary of a closed plane diagram or figure.

Plane – The simplist kind of two-dimensional surface, generated by the path of a straight line and defined by its length and width; usually defined by its shape and surface characteristics.

Porch – A roofed entrance, either incorporated in a building or as an applied feature to the exterior.

Quoin – One of a series of stones or bricks used to mark or visually reinforce the exterior corners of a building and often through a contrast of size, shape, color or material.

Rectangular – A plane four-sided parallelogram with four right angles: may be neaqrly square or stretched out to be nearly a band.

Relief – A projecting wall decoration raised above the background plane.

Rendering – a drawing of a building that artistically delineates materials, scale, shades, and is done for the purpose of presentation.

Ridge – The horizontal lines at the junction of the upper edges of two sloping roof structures.

Rhythm – Any kind of movement characterized by the regular occurrence of elements, lines, shapes and forms.

Soffit – A ceiling or exposed underside surface of a roof overhang, archway, balcony, beam or column.

Soldier Bond – Brick, block or stone laid vertically with the longer, narrow face exposed.

Veranda – Similar to a balcony but located on the ground level and can extend around one, two or all sides of a building.

Vertical – opposite to the plane of the horizon, usually a direction rising straight upward and downward.

Window – An opening in an exterior wall of a building to admit light and air.